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Commissioner

DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES
Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities



M. Jodi Rell
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DCF Nearly Quadruples Goals Met Compared to Two Years Ago
Mark For Reducing Reliance on
Residential Placements Met For First Time

HARTFORD – The Department of Children and Families (DCF) met or came within 3 percentage points of meeting 18 of 20 goals measured in the second quarter of 2006 and met 15 goals outright, a report filed Monday with the federal court showed,.

The number of goals achieved is nearly four times that of the second quarter of 2004 (when four goals were met) and is six more than just a year ago (when nine goals were met in the second quarter of 2005). For the first time, the Department met the goal for reducing reliance on residential care – a success that the Federal Court Monitor’s report cited as an “immense achievement.”

In addition to staff meeting 15 goals outright, staff came within one-half of one percent in another, came within one and one-half percent of another, and came within 3 percent on a final measure – missing that goal by a single child out of 31 applicable cases.

Commissioner Darlene Dunbar, MSW, said Connecticut families and children are benefiting from the improvements by receiving treatment in more community settings and in less institutional environments.

“Whenever a child receives effective treatment in their home or in a place like their home including a foster home or group home as opposed to an institutional setting, everything we know says that is better for the child,” the Commissioner said. “As the result of a lot of work, there are more than 200 children who no longer depend on institutional care, and there are even more children who are getting care in Connecticut instead of having to go out of state.

“The improved numbers are good to see,” Commissioner Dunbar said. “But much more important is that the improvements do touch the lives of many children and families.”

Commissioner Dunbar said staff have made remarkable progress in a short time.

“As I heard a seasoned social worker remark, high levels of performance have become the “New Normal” at DCF,” Commissioner Dunbar said. “Staff have shown a great consistency in making gains and sustaining previous achievements.”

Through ten quarters of the Exit Plan, four goals have been met for nine or more quarters. Both goals relating to the timeliness of investigations have been met for seven consecutive quarters. Five other goals have been met for three or four consecutive

quarters. Goals for timely permanency, specifically reunification and adoption, both have been met in each of the last four quarters with the exception of adoption in the fourth quarter of 2005 – when performance still was nearly three times better than in the first quarter of the Exit Plan.

This quarterly report shows DCF staff met the following outcomes:

- Commencement Of Investigations: The goal of 90 percent was exceeded for the seventh quarter in a row with a current achievement of 96.4 percent, the highest since measurement began for the Exit Plan in the Fourth Quarter of 2004.
- Completion Of Investigations: Workers completed investigations in a timely manner in 93.1 percent of cases, also exceeding the goal of 85 percent for the seventh consecutive quarter.
- Search For Relatives: For the third consecutive quarter time, staff achieved the 85 percent goal for relative searches and met this requirement for 93.8 percent of children, the highest since measurement began.
- Repeat Maltreatment: For the second consecutive quarter under the Exit Plan, the goal of 7 percent was achieved with 7 percent of children experiencing repeat maltreatment.
- Maltreatment Of Children In Out-of-Home Care: The Department sustained achievement of the goal of 2 percent or less for the tenth consecutive quarter with an actual measure of 0.7 percent.
- Timely Reunification: For the fourth consecutive quarter, this measure exceeded the 60 percent goal with a mark of 64.4 percent.
- Timely Adoption: For the second consecutive quarter and for three of the last four quarters, staff exceeded the 32 percent goal for the timely completion of adoptions within 24 months by meeting the timeline for 36.4 percent of the children.
- Multiple Placements: For the ninth consecutive quarter, the Department exceeded the 85 percent goal with a rate of 96.6 percent, the highest recorded under the Exit Plan.
- Foster Parent Training: For the ninth consecutive quarter, the Department met the 100 percent goal.
- Worker-To-Child Visitation In Out Of Home Cases: For the third consecutive quarter and four of the last five quarters, the Department met the 85 percent goal for maintaining regular visits by meeting requirements in 85.6 percent of out of home cases.
- Worker To Child Visitation In In-Home Cases: For the third consecutive quarter, workers met required visitation frequency in 87.4 percent of cases, thereby exceeding the 85 percent standard. The percent of in-home cases where visitation standards were met has more than doubled since the Exit Plan measures began at the start of 2004.
- Caseload Standards: For the ninth consecutive quarter, no Department social worker carried more cases than the standard under the Exit Plan.
- Reduction In Residential Care: For the first time, staff met the goal of having no more than 11 percent of children in DCF care in a residential placement with an achievement of 10.8 percent. As of the end of July 2006, there were 239 fewer children in residential care than in April 2004 – a reduction of 26.8 percent.
- Discharge Measures: For the fourth consecutive quarter and the fifth time overall under the Exit Plan, staff met the 85 percent goal for ensuring children discharged at age 18 from state care had attained either educational and/or employment goals by achieving a 91 percent measure.
- Multi-disciplinary Exams: For the second time, Department staff met the 85 percent goal by ensuring that 90.1 percent of children entering care received a timely multi-disciplinary exam.

In addition, staff came within three percentage points or less of attaining these goals:

- Re-entry Into Care: After having met the 7 percent goal for re-entry into care for the first time last quarter, staff came within one-half of one percent during this quarter.
- Placement Within Licensed Capacity: While attaining the 96 percent goal in three of the previous five quarters, staff came within one and one-half percent of meeting the goal during this quarter.
- Discharge Of Mentally Ill Or Retarded Children: Staff made the appropriate referral to DMHAS or DMR for 30 of 31 applicable children and so came within three percentage points of meeting the 100 percent goal. The 97 percent performance level is more than double the performance at the beginning of the Exit Plan.

This is the first quarter that staff have met the goal for reducing reliance on residential placements – surpassing the 11 percent goal with an outcome measure of 10.8 percent. Achievement of this goal reflects some of the most innovative and intensive efforts of the Department, including the development of a managed service system in each area office and in the Central Office to plan on a child-by-child basis the most appropriate level of care that enables as many children as possible to remain in community settings. In addition, the Department has had great success opening 24 therapeutic group homes in State Fiscal Year 2006 and expects to make similar progress this year with another 24 therapeutic group homes planned. The Administrative Services Organization, which just started operations in January 2006, also has been effective in seeing that only children that require residential placement are admitted by ensuring that children must have the requisite treatment needs for that level of care.

As a result of these efforts, 239 fewer children require a residential setting to receive treatment compared to April 2004. That represents a reduction of 26.8 percent in the number of children in a residential placement in 26 months. Also very significant – although it is not an outcome measure itself – there are nearly 200 fewer children in an out of state residential program compared to September 2004. That represents a 39 percent reduction in 21 months.

The Department is mindful that important challenges remain to be addressed particularly in the area of treatment planning and meeting children’s needs.

“While strong evidence of significant progress across a broad area of our work exists, the Department fully recognizes the great amount of work to be done and the challenges that remain,” Commissioner Dunbar said.